



News from

U.S. Representative Todd Tiahrt

4th District, Kansas

www.house.gov/tiahrt

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Contact Chuck Knapp
(316) 262-8992

Tiahrt Introduces OSHA Reform Legislation

WASHINGTON – U.S. Representative Todd Tiahrt (R-Goddard) today introduced “The OSHA and Employer Cooperation Act of 2004.” The legislation is designed to help employers and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) work together in a more cooperative way to reach the common goal of a safe work environment.

“In talking with both OSHA officials and employers, it was obvious all parties want workers to be safe,” said Tiahrt. “Unfortunately, current laws and regulations often create an adversarial relationship. This legislation should resolve some of that conflict.”

Nearly one year ago, OSHA targeted Sedgwick County construction sites, allegedly threatening steep fines that caused numerous contractors to shut down job sites rather than face the severe penalties. Following a meeting between area home builders and OSHA officials, a compromise partnership was struck between the parties, but the underlying problem still exists.

“OSHA officials in Washington told me that they were forced to level fines against contractors, even for minor infractions, because that’s what the law mandates. I took their comments under advisement and have introduced legislation that will give them more flexibility and the ability to work with contractors rather than against them,” Tiahrt said.

Tiahrt’s legislation would also introduce equity to the citation process. Currently, businesses have 15 days to contest, while OSHA has 6 months to issue citations. The bill would alter the requirements to give OSHA 30 days to issue a citation, and provide employers with 30 days to contest it. The bill also provides incentives for expeditious correction of violations, clarifies OSHA authority in certain citation policy matters, and promotes better communication between OSHA and contractors.

Tiahrt said he believes the legislation, which includes Congressman Charlie Norwood as an original co-sponsor, has a good chance of passing the House. Norwood is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections of the Education and Workforce Committee.